

(12) UK Patent Application (19) GB (11) 2 384 126 (13) A

(43) Date of A Publication 16.07.2003

(21) Application No 0219401.7

(22) Date of Filing 13.08.2002

(30) Priority Data
(31) 0123640

(32) 19.09.2001

(33) GB

(71) Applicant(s)
MBDA UK Limited
 (Incorporated in the United Kingdom)
 Six Hills Way, STEVENAGE, Hertfordshire,
 SG1 2DA, United Kingdom

(72) Inventor(s)
Martyn Robert Jennings
Lee Douglas Miller

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service
BAE Systems plc
 Group IP Department, Lancaster House,
 P O Box 87,
 Farnborough Aerospace Centre,
 FARNBOROUGH, Hants, GU14 6YU,
 United Kingdom

(51) INT CL⁷
 H04B 10/04, G01S 7/282, H04K 1/00

(52) UK CL (Edition V)
 H4B BK4

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(58) Field of Search
 UK CL (Edition V) H4B, H4D
 INT CL⁷ G01S, H04B
 Other: Online: WPI, EPODOC, JAPIO

(54) Abstract Title
Optical pulse generator

(57) An electromagnetic radiation multiple pulse generator comprises a radiation source 2 for producing discrete pulses of radiation 24, 28, 32, a splitter 6 for splitting each pulse along several transmission paths 7-14 and a combiner 16 for combining the split pulses to produce output pulses 26, 30, 34. In the preferred embodiment optical pulses are used and the transmission paths are optical fibre delay lines. In one embodiment the fibres have different lengths/delays so that each input pulse produces a train of output pulses as in figure 1. The delays may be selected to produce one single output pulse of longer duration (fig. 3a), or some of the delays may be equal to produce other pulse shapes (fig. 3b and 3c). In a further embodiment the delay lines may have switches to enable or disable individual paths (see 100-108 in fig. 2). Applications include communications/signalling, target sensing and unique signature pulses for secure communications.

Fig. 1.

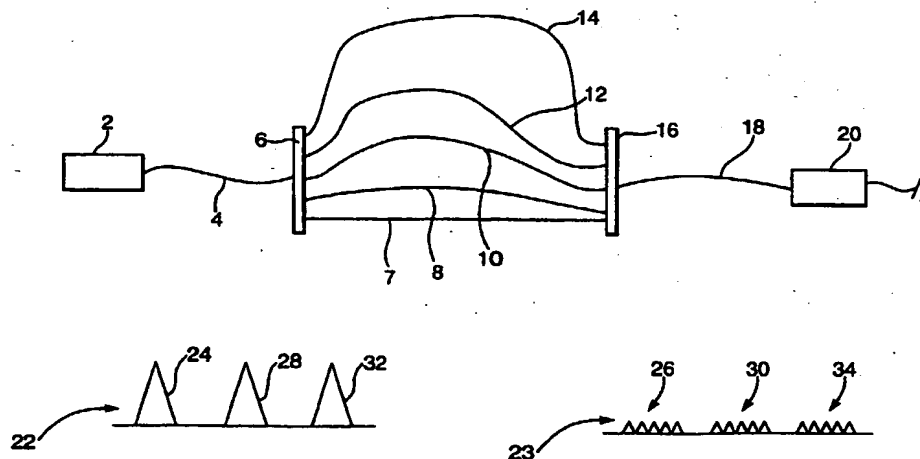


Fig.1.

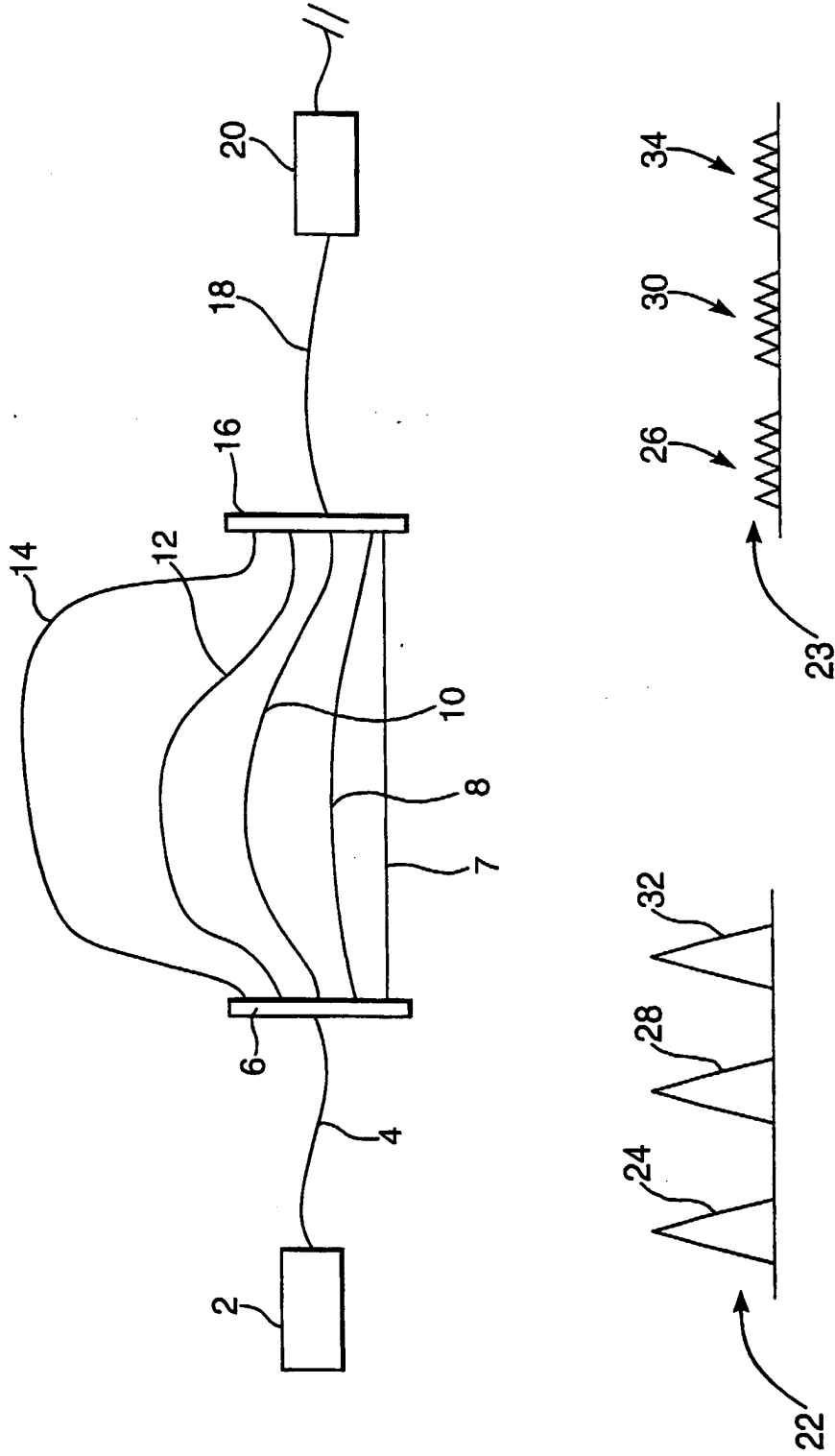


Fig.2.

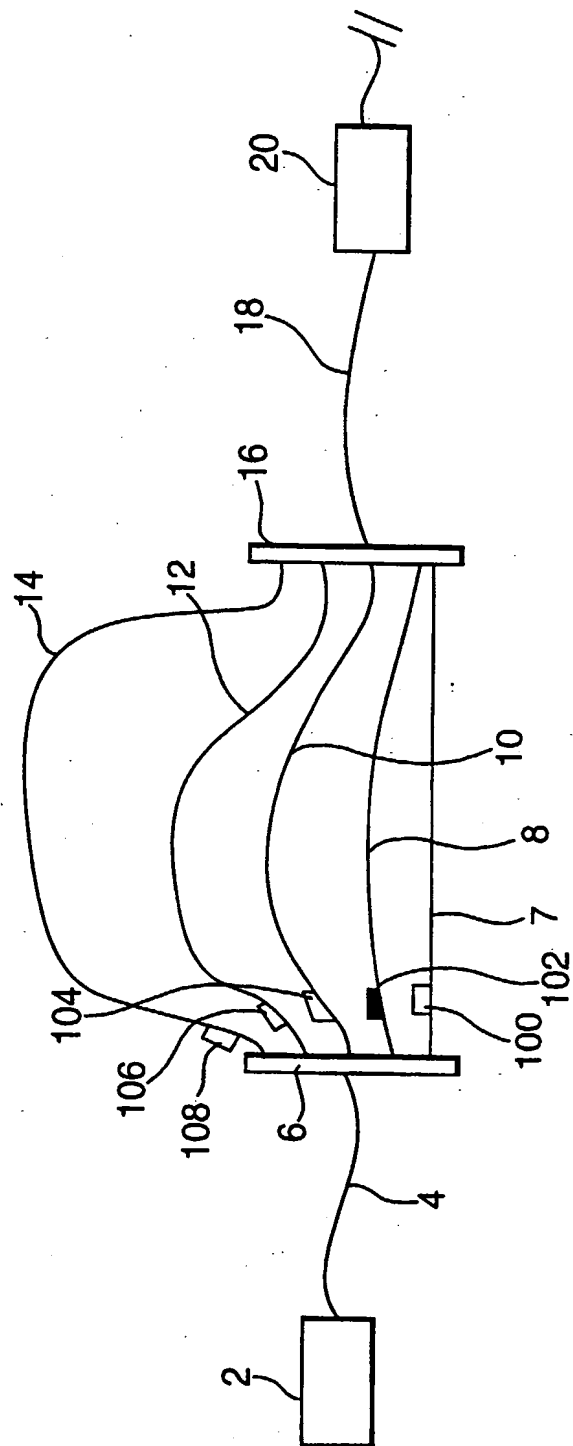


Fig.3a.

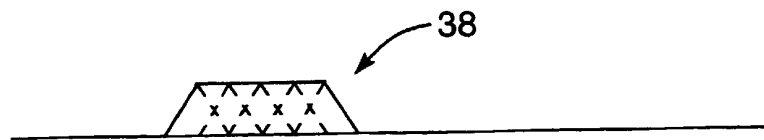


Fig.3b.

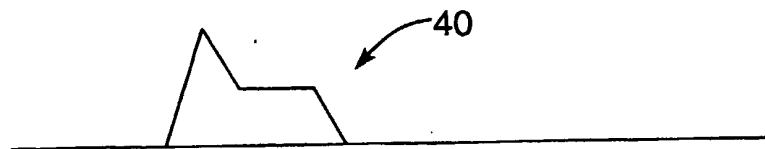
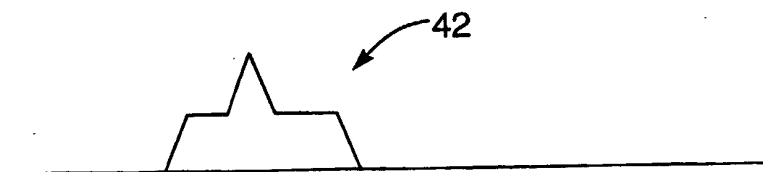


Fig.3c.



MULTIPLE PULSE GENERATION

This invention relates to the field of electromagnetic radiation pulse generation
5 and more specifically, but not exclusively, to the use of optical techniques in the
generation of multiple electromagnetic pulses from a single input pulse.

The generation of electromagnetic pulses by radiation emitting sources is well
known in the arts of communications and sensor systems and numerous
10 electrically based techniques have been developed to enable the encoding of
such pulses for subsequent recognition and identification.

The state of the art electrically based techniques used to modify radiation
pulses such that they may be readily identified rely on the ability to affect certain
15 characteristics such as pulse length, duration, amplitude, frequency or other
characteristics such as rise and decay time. Additionally multiple pulses may be
used to further distinguish a generated pulse.

The ability to modify the pulse repetition rate frequency (PRF) for multiple
20 pulses is also a characteristic which can be exploited, but there are present
physical and electromagnetic limitations to the maximum PRF that can be
achieved.

Accordingly there is provided an electromagnetic radiation (EMR) multiple pulse
25 generator, comprising,

an EMR source for producing discrete pulses of radiation,

an EMR splitter for receiving the pulses of radiation produced by the EMR
source, said splitter providing a plurality of EMR transmission paths for the
received pulses, each of said transmission paths having different physical

characteristics for modifying EMR pulses passing through said paths relative to the input pulses,

an EMR combiner for combining the modified outputs of said plurality of EMR transmission paths, and

- 5 at least one combined EMR output transmission path for transmitting said combined EMR output.

The combined EMR output may comprise a train of discrete pulses.

- 10 Alternatively the combined EMR output may comprise a single pulse having a duration longer than that of the input pulse. Alternatively the combined EMR output may comprise a pulse train comprising at least two pulses wherein at least one pulse of the pulse train has a duration longer than that of the input pulse.

- 15 In a further embodiment of the invention the EMR multiple pulse generator further comprises switching means for acting on at least one of the transmission paths, the switching means being capable of enabling or disabling the transmission path.

- 20 Advantageously the switching means comprise a photonic switch. The switch may be utilised to change the pulse train transmitted from the EMR combiner. Preferably, each of the EMR transmission paths of the EMR splitter comprises a switch. This maximises the number of variations which can be made to the pulse train.

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An example of some preferred embodiments of the invention will now be disclosed by way of example only with reference to the following drawings in which;

Figure 1 - shows a first embodiment of an EMR multiple pulse generator in accordance with the invention.

Figure 2 - shows a second embodiment of an EMR multiple pulse generator in accordance with the invention.

5 Figures 3a to 3c show output pulses which may be obtained using apparatus in accordance with the present invention.

In figure 1 a radiation source 2 is shown connected to an EMR splitter 6 via an optical fibre link 4. Radiation pulses (shown 22) generated by the radiation
10 source 2 are transmitted via the optical fibre 4 to the splitter 6 wherein the pulse energy is distributed throughout five optical fibres (7,8,10,12,14) each having different physical characteristics. In this example the optical fibres are delay lines having different time delays, which in the example shown are created by each of said fibres having a different physical length.

15

Other physical characteristics of the optical fibres may be used to modify the EMR pulses. Various known mechanisms by which features can be induced in materials suitable for transmitting EMR pulses are intended to be included in the scope of the invention and include, but are not limited to, differing physical
20 lengths, differing material properties such as doping to produce frequency shifting, or elements added to the material which change the state of the photons passing through and variations in fibre refractive index.

The resulting production of identifiable modified multiple pulses is known in the
25 art as pulse train coding.

In the example shown in figure 1 it is assumed that the energy of the pulse train 22 incident on the splitter 6 is equally distributed amongst the 5 optical delay lines (7,8,10,12,14) each fibre thereby carrying a pulse of 1/5 the total energy of

the original pulse unless a gain mechanism is employed in individual delay lines. The generation of increased PRF in the multiple pulse outputs 26,30,34 without any additional energy input is at the expense of individual pulse energy, but provides for a substantial increase in the complexity of the resultant multiple pulse. The multiple pulse generated may be used in detecting targets, where a return signal is required. Although the pulse train (26,30,34) has a lower amplitude than the original single pulse (24,28,32), the detection rate is improved as background noise has less effect on the detection of a pulse train than a single pulse, which might be obscured by a sudden peak in noise.

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This feature of the example is not intended to limit its application to such an energy distribution and accordingly pulse energy 22 incident on the splitter 6 could equally have been distributed amongst the delay lines (7,8,10,12,14) in accordance with any fractional distribution regime. Such a system could thereby produce multiple pulses with varying amplitudes between adjacent pulses.

15

The pulses carried by each of the delay lines (7,8,10,12,14) are recombined in the EMR combiner 16 and transmitted via the combined EMR transmission line 18 to an output device 20. The recombined pulses 23 are characterised in this example by five lower energy increased frequency pulses, the PRF of said pulses being determined by the particular characteristics of the delay lines (7,8,10,12,14).

20

The output device may typically comprise a communications or signalling device where identification of particular pulse characteristics are required to enable either the receipt or transmission of secure communications or to effect the switching of a transmission or receipt line.

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The generation of multiple pulses from the radiation source 2 (shown diagrammatically at 22) produces a series of pulses 24,28,32 which are

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modified by passing through the splitter 6, delay lines 7,8,10,12,14 and combiner 16 to produce a series of multiple pulses shown respectively at 26,30,34.

- 5 The example shown in figure 1 utilises the characteristics of equally spaced physical time delays to produce modified multiple pulses 26,30,34. Alternative methods of encoding pulses may also include the use of delay lines with varying time duration between adjacent pulses and/or lines (with or without delays) having differing colours or materials which introduce encoding elements into the
10 resultant multiple pulses which would prove difficult to replicate or copy.

This feature lends the invention to the field of secure communications whereby the transmission and receipt of unique 'signature' pulses comprising known pulse repetition frequencies (e.g. varying or constant) and/or the inclusion of
15 individual pulses within a multiple pulse sequence that may include one or more colours or shifts in energy level could significantly increase the security of such systems.

Figure 2 shows a radiation source 2 connected to an EMR splitter 6 via an
20 optical fibre link 4. The EMR splitter 6 comprises five optical fibre delay lines (7, 8, 10, 12, 14), each having a different physical length as in the embodiment of Figure 1. Radiation pulses (shown 22) generated by the radiation source 2 are transmitted via the optical fibre 4 to the splitter 6. The optical fibre delay lines (7, 8, 10, 12, 14) of this embodiment each comprise a switch (100, 102, 104,
25 106, 108) for enabling or preventing an EMR pulse from travelling along the optical fibre. The switch may be a mechanical switch, or a photonic switch, for example.

In Figure 2, switches 100, 104, 106 and 108 are configured to allow EMR
30 pulses to travel along the optical fibres 7, 10, 12 and 14 respectively. Switch

102 however is configured to prevent an EMR pulse from travelling along the optical fibre 8. The resulting pulse train 36 is different from the pulse train 23 of Figure 1. It can be seen that in the embodiment of Figure 2, the resulting pulse train may be modified by using the switches so that different optical fibres are
5 switched between 'on and off'. The switching can occur rapidly and may be adapted to be remotely controlled.

An advantage of being able to vary the pulse train is that if an unwanted observer became familiar with the pulse train used, the pulse train could be
10 immediately changed without having to modify the pulse generation equipment.

Figure 3a shows a single output pulse 38 which may be achieved using apparatus similar to that described with respect to Figure 1. As described in Figure 1, a radiation source 2 is connected to an EMR splitter 6 via an optical
15 fibre link 4. Radiation pulses 22 generated by the radiation source 2 are transmitted via the optical fibre 4 to the splitter 6 wherein the pulse energy is distributed throughout five optical fibres (7,8,10,12,14) each having different physical characteristics. In the example of Figure 1 the optical fibres were delay
20 lines having different time delays, which resulted in multiple output pulses 26,30,34 each comprising a train of discrete pulses. In this example, the optical fibres are delay lines having a very small difference in time delay between each of the fibres, so that the radiation pulses arrive at the EMR combiner almost simultaneously, one pulse overlapping with another, such that the resultant
25 output is a single pulse 38 having a duration greater than that of the input pulse 22.

The time delays may be introduced by varying the physical characteristics of the optical fibres (7,8,10,12,14) as described above with respect to Figure 1.

In this example, the energy of the pulse 22 incident on the splitter 6 is equally distributed amongst the five optical delay lines (7,8,10,12,14), each fibre thereby carrying a pulse of $1/5$ of the total energy of the input pulse 22 unless a gain mechanism is employed in the individual delay lines. Other energy
5 distributions are possible, for example to produce the output pulses 40 or 42 shown in Figures 3b and 3c respectively. Similar output pulses to those shown in Figures 3b and 3c may also be achieved by permitting more than one delay line to have the same time delay.

- 10 Switches such as those described with respect to Figure 2 may also be used to prevent pulses from travelling along particular fibres, to further vary the output pulse or pulse train.

Other advantages and improvements over state of the art systems will be
15 readily apparent to those skilled in the art and such embodiments and alternative embodiments which utilise the inventive concept of the disclosure contained herein are considered included within the scope of the claimed invention.

CLAIMS

- 1 An electromagnetic radiation (EMR) multiple pulse generator,
comprising,
5 an EMR source for producing discrete pulses of radiation,
an EMR splitter for receiving the pulses of radiation produced by the
EMR source, said splitter providing a plurality of EMR transmission paths
for the received pulses, each of said transmission paths having physical
characteristics for modifying EMR pulses passing through said paths
10 relative to the input pulses,
an EMR combiner for combining the modified outputs of said plurality of
EMR transmission paths, and
at least one combined EMR output transmission path for transmitting
said combined EMR output.
- 15 2 An electromagnetic radiation (EMR) multiple pulse generator as claimed
in Claim 1 wherein at least two transmission paths introduce different
time delays relative to each other, such that the combined EMR output
comprises a train of discrete pulses from a single input pulse.
- 20 3 An electromagnetic radiation (EMR) multiple pulse generator as claimed
in Claim 1 wherein said transmission paths introduce different time
delays relative to each other, such that the combined EMR output
comprises an output pulse train of at least two discrete pulses, wherein at
25 least one pulse of said output pulse train has a duration longer than that
of the input pulse.
- 4 An electromagnetic radiation (EMR) multiple pulse generator as claimed
in Claim 1 wherein at least two transmission paths introduce different

time delays relative to each other, such that the combined EMR output comprises a single pulse having a duration longer than that of the input pulse.

- 5 An electromagnetic radiation (EMR) multiple pulse generator as claimed
5 in any preceding claim further comprising switching means for acting on
at least one of said plurality of EMR transmission paths, the switching
means being capable of enabling or disabling the transmission path.

- 6 An electromagnetic radiation (EMR) multiple pulse generator
10 substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the
accompanying drawings.



Application No: GB 0219401.7
Claims searched: 1-6

Examiner: Matthew Nelson
Date of search: 9 May 2003

Patents Act 1977 : Search Report under Section 17

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Relevant to claims	Identity of document and passage or figure of particular relevance
X	1, 2	EP 0905937 A2 (LUCENT TECH.) See figures 1-3.
X	1-3	WO 01/67642 A2 (UNI. OF SOUTHAMPTON) See figure 1A.
X, P	1-4	US 20020080436 A1 (HAIT) See e.g. the abstract & figure 11.
X, P	1, 2	US 20020061164 A1 (HALL et al) See figures 5 and 8.
X	1	US 5757912 (BLOW) See whole document.
X	1, 2	US 5418360 (SOKOLOWSKA et al) See figure 3 and col. 6, line 53 - col. 7, line 35.
X	1, 2, 4	US 5113423 (CSONKA) See the abstract and figure 6.
X	1, 2	US 4296319 (FRANKS et al) See whole document.
X	1, 2	JP 560103548 A (TOSHIBA) See online abstract.

Categories:

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
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Field of Search:

Search of GB, EP, WO & US patent documents classified in the following areas of the UKC^v:

H4B; H4D

Worldwide search of patent documents classified in the following areas of the IPC⁷:

G01S; H04B

The following online and other databases have been used in the preparation of this search report:

WPI, EPODOC, JAPIO